

Mentorship Award Summary Report – Jeff Donovan MD PhD (University of Toronto)

February 1, 2009

RE: Summary Report for Jeff Donovan MD PhD
Mentor: Maria Hordinsky, MD University of Minnesota

Dear Medical Dermatology Society,

I am grateful to have received a Mentorship Award. This generous award enabled me to pursue training in hair diseases with Dr. Maria Hordinsky at the University of Minnesota in January 2009. It was an outstanding experience, providing broad exposure to many clinical and research aspects of hair diseases.

I saw patients at the University of Minnesota Medical Center in Minneapolis, MN and the Fairview Maple Grove Medical Center in Maple Grove, MN. Children and adults from across the country were referred to Dr. Hordinsky for evaluation of a wide-range of non-scarring and scarring alopecias. Dr. Desiree Langel, a dermatopathologist at the University of Minnesota, worked closely with Dr. Hordinsky to evaluate scalp biopsies. I had the opportunity to review slides with Dr. Langel of patient biopsies we performed in the clinic. I also reviewed slides of hair shafts with Dr. Hordinsky to evaluate for hair shaft abnormalities that could contribute to a hair loss in certain patients.

What made the training experience at the University of Minnesota so fantastic was the opportunity to participate in a wide-range of activities within the department. For example, I had the opportunity to attend weekly Neurodermatology Research meetings. There, research fellows and scientists presented recent research findings to Dr. Hordinsky, as well as to the other faculty group members, Dr. Marna Ericson and Dr. George Wilcox. The Neurodermatology research group is investigating novel pathways in cutaneous nerves that may modulate hair growth and has special expertise in laser scanning confocal microscopy.

In addition to basic research meetings, I attended Clinical Research meetings and learned of the many clinical studies and collaborations in the Department. The Department of Dermatology at the University of Minnesota is one of five centers in the United States that receives national funding to recruit patients with alopecia areata into a national disease registry. I witnessed the process by which patients with alopecia areata and control patients without alopecia areata were enrolled in the registry. Skin and blood samples, along with epidemiologic and quality-of-life data, were collected and sent to the main registry center at MD Anderson in Houston, TX. The Alopecia Areata Registry provides DNA and cell lines to researchers interested in investigating specific research questions about the pathogenesis of alopecia areata.

During the month in Minnesota, I was fortunate to work with Dr. Erin Warshaw at the Occupational and Contact Dermatitis Clinic at the Hennepin Faculty Associates in downtown Minneapolis. Dr. Warshaw sees complex referrals for contact dermatitis, including referrals from Dr. Hordinsky for evaluation of possible allergic contact dermatitis to hair products and hair dyes. I also had the privilege to observe hair transplantation, working with Dr. Ron Shapiro and Dr. Paul Shapiro in Bloomington, MN. Several of Dr. Hordinsky's patients with "burnt-out" lichen planopilaris had undergone successful hair transplantation and I enjoyed learning more about the role of hair transplantation to treat scarring alopecia.

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I participated in a wide array of learning opportunities during the month. I had the opportunity to initiate a small retrospective study and prepare several manuscripts as well as a book chapter for publication. I presented at departmental rounds and delivered lectures to medical students who were rotating in the department. Dr. Hordinsky met with me often to discuss progress and to suggest modifications to the monthly schedule that she thought might be beneficial to the acquisition of broad knowledge and skills in hair diseases. For example, when I expressed an interest to learn how wigs and hairpieces were manufactured and to learn more about costs for patients, Dr. Hordinsky quickly connected me with a large wig design company just outside of Minneapolis. I ultimately spent an afternoon learning about wigs in depth from an experienced wig consultant.

Finally, it was fun and enjoyable to work with Dr. Hordinsky. She is a terrific teacher and encouraged active discussion around cases seen in clinic. But, I not only advanced my skills in diagnosing and treating hair loss in children and adults, but also gained valuable insight from Dr. Hordinsky into how to best provide compassionate care to patients with alopecia.

Thanks to the Medical Dermatology Society for making this possible.

Yours truly,



Jeff Donovan MD PhD

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